

The Oldest Capital

Do you know what the oldest state capital in the United States is? It's not Boston, Massachusetts. It's not Richmond, Virginia. In fact, it's not any of the original 13 colonies.

The oldest state capital is Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Santa Fe is located in the north-central part of the state, near the Rocky Mountains and not far from the river called the Rio Grande. Spanish settlers established the city as the capital of New Mexico in 1609 - eleven years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock.



Of course, the Spanish settlers did not find an empty land when they arrived in New Mexico. Native Americans already lived there. Spanish settlers and Native Americans exchanged goods and ideas as they built the new city called Santa Fe.

The Spanish settlers brought with them crops, such as wheat, onions, and apples. They also brought cattle, horses, and sheep – animals that changed the way of life in New Mexico forever. Native Americans gave the Spanish settlers corn and other local foods and showed the Spanish how to make adobe, the material Native Americans used to build their houses.

Adobe is a sun-dried brick made of mud and straw. An adobe house, with its flat roof and thick walls, is perfect for the desert climate of Santa Fe. It keeps the heat *in* during the winter and *out* during the summer. The Spanish contributed fireplaces, which could be used for warmth and for cooking.

Together the Spanish and Native Americans created the special and exciting culture of today's Santa Fe. If you walk around the city, you will see many adobe houses built in the original native style. At The Plaza of Santa Fe, in the heart of the city, you will find many Native American artists selling pottery, rugs, jewelry, and other handmade crafts.

At one side of The Plaza is the Palace of the Governors, the first large building constructed in Santa Fe. That is where the local governor and other Spanish military leaders lived. It is the oldest public building in the United States, and it is still in use today. The Palace of the Governors is now a museum where you can learn about the history and the arts of New Mexico.

Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 5
LA.A.1.2.3 Vocabulary Form A

Every year, at the end of July, an exhibition called the “Spanish Market” is held at the Palace of the Governors. Spanish and Indian artists from all over New Mexico come to the Palace to display their crafts. There you’ll find many kinds of beautiful art, such as paintings done on wood and mirror frames made of tin - all done in the true New Mexican style.

Maybe you’ll be lucky enough to be in Santa Fe when The Festival of Santa Fe takes place. First held in 1712, the festival celebrates the return of Spanish colonists to the city in 1962.

The festival is a weeklong party. It begins at night with the burning of a wooden figure named Zozobra, which represents “Old Man Gloom.” Once gloom is destroyed, musicians play lively music in The Plaza, and people dance in the streets. All kinds of local foods are sold in booths. Of course, lots of New Mexican food is flavored with hot chili peppers. So you’d better be careful about eating too many spicy foods, or your mouth will feel as though it’s on fire. But not all the food is hot. For example, you’ll find a soft fried bread called *sopapilla*. Put some honey on the *sopapilla* and eat the bread while it’s still warm. It’s a taste treat you’ll remember for a long time.

If you do go to Santa Fe, be sure to see the Loretto Chapel. There’s an unusual story about this church. It was completed in 1873, but it did not have a staircase to the loft because the architect was killed in a gunfight. Legend says that one day a stranger suddenly appeared looking for work. He built a wooden staircase. It is remarkable because it was constructed without nails – only wooden pegs were used. The stranger then disappeared as suddenly as he came and was never heard from again. He did not even leave a bill for his work. Scientists who have studied the staircase say that the wood did not come from anywhere in New Mexico.

Who built the staircase? Where did the wood come from? No one knows for sure. It’s all a mystery. It is part of the fascinating story of Santa Fe – the oldest capital in the United States – and one of the most interesting.

Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 5
LA.A.1.2.3 Vocabulary Form A

Name _____ **Date** _____

Directions: Read the passage “The Oldest Capital”, then circle the letter of the correct answer.

1. Read this sentence from the article.

The Spanish contributed fireplaces, which could be used for warmth and for cooking.

What does the word *contributed* mean in this sentence?

- A. exchanged
 - B. exhibited
 - C. gave
 - D. repaired
2. Which two words from the article have almost the SAME meaning?
- A. built, constructed
 - B. studied, completed
 - C. exchanged, created
 - D. disappeared, destroyed
3. When the author writes that the Spanish settlers and Native Americans “exchanged goods and ideas” he means that they
- A. traded crops, animals, and building materials.
 - B. changed the way of life in New Mexico forever.
 - C. established Santa Fe as the capital of New Mexico.
 - D. held a festival to celebrate the return of Spanish colonists.

Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 5
LA.A.1.2.3 Vocabulary Form A

4. Read this sentence from the article.

Spanish and Indian artists from all over New Mexico come to the Palace to display their crafts.

What does the word *display* mean?

- A. buy
- B. hide
- C. destroy
- D. exhibit

5. Read this sentence from the article.

It is part of the fascinating story of Santa Fe - the oldest capital in the United States - and one of the most interesting.

Which word means the OPPOSITE of *fascinating*?

- A. annoying
- B. appealing
- C. boring
- D. frustrating

<p style="text-align: center;">Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 5 LA.A.1.2.3 Vocabulary Form A</p>

Answer Key – Oldest Capital

LA.A.1.2.3: Using context clues, prefixes, suffixes, root words, word relationships (including multiple meanings, antonyms, synonyms, homonyms, homophones, and word origins), the student identifies the meaning of a word or phrase in a passage and/or graphic. Analysis and/or inference may be required to comprehend the meaning of the word or phrase.

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